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Monthly Newsletter

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Regional news

Improved Education for Central Asia's Children

In October USAID and its education sector partners celebrated completion of the USAID-funded Participation, Education and Knowledge Strengthening (PEAKS) project. The project improved the education environment for more than 370,000 students in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan by training over 7,000 teachers and administrators in interactive teaching and school management, providing over 60,000 resource materials for teachers, and helping local communities to renovate schools. The project developed a network of 18 school-based training and resource centers, where teachers from neighboring areas can upgrade their skills. These centers also serve as models and resource hubs for other schools in their areas. The project contributed to efforts to solve the problem of limited funding available for schools by introducing a new per capita school finance mechanism that promotes greater equity and efficiency in education spending. In Tajikistan, this model has been replicated by other donors and picked up by the government for nation-wide implementation. PEAKS ran from January 2003 - October 2007. It was implemented by the Academy for Educational Development.



Thousands of children in the region enjoy interactive teaching methods, introduced to their schools by the USAID-funded PEAKS project. Photo: PEAKS

New Project to Continue Support for Education Reforms in the Region

USAID awarded a contract to Creative Associates International, Inc. to implement a five-year \$12 million Quality Learning Program in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan. The program will work to improve learning outcomes for the region's students through introduction of modern teaching and student assessment methodologies, involvement of teachers in curriculum and education policy development, assisting host governments to effectively address teacher shortages, and promotion of transparent and efficient school finance and management systems. The project will build on achievements and lessons learned by USAID's previous education programs. The program will also support government efforts to implement their national education strategies and, when applicable, support governments in implementation of Fast Track Initiative grants, including those awarded to Tajikistan for 2006-2008 and to Kyrgyzstan for 2007-2009.



USAID Mission Director Bill Frej and the Minister of Education of Tajikistan sign the Memorandum of Understanding on the new education project. Photo: USAID

Kazakhstan

Thousands of Kazakhstani Students Learn Economics from Junior Achievement Programs

During the 2006-2007 academic year, over 200,000 school students in Kazakhstan studied economics and entrepreneurship from USAID-supported Junior Achievement programs. The program, brought to the



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country with funding from USAID twelve years ago, currently operates in all 14 regions of Kazakhstan. It offers such local-language courses as Student Company, Management and Economics Simulation Exercise, Global Marketplace, Global Business Ethics, Banks in Action. Four of these program textbooks have been approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Additionally, last year, the winners of the Junior Achievement National Student Tournaments in Kazakhstan received scholarships to study at the Kazakh-British Technical University and Kazakh Academy of Labor and Social Relations.

USAID-supported Changes to Save Over \$130 million for Kazakhstani Businesses Annually

Changes in the Law “On Government Procurement,” introduced with assistance from the USAID Business Environment Improvement Project, will produce millions of dollars in savings for local businesses. In cooperation with Parliament deputies and the Forum of Entrepreneurs of Kazakhstan, the project introduced a number of provisions that increase procurement transparency and reduce costs for bidding businesses. New provisions require the amount of the tender to be announced to all potential bidders and the winner to be chosen by a commission in the presence of all participants of the competition, permit audio- and video recording of the process by its attendees, and place all decisions and protocols of the competition on a Government website. The changes also reduce the contract maintenance fee by bidders from 3% to 1% of the tender amount. This is one of the several business environment improvements introduced over the past year by the project.

Kazakhstani Women Learn a More Woman and Child-Friendly Approach to Birth

Nearly 16,000 pregnant women and their partners received birth preparedness lessons at the USAID-supported pilots across the country. The lessons were delivered by the USAID ZdravPlus project together with hospitals where the project is implementing its maternal and child health care pilots in the cities of Astana, Almaty, Karaganda, and Karaganda Oblast. The project works to update prenatal, delivery, and newborn care for women and their infants at the primary health care level and at maternity hospitals by introducing “evidence-based medicine.” “Evidence-based medicine” is the term used to describe medical practices which are based on scientific research and rigorous testing.

Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyz Family Medicine Celebrates 10th Anniversary

In October Kyrgyzstan’s medical professionals marked 10 years since the family medicine practices were introduced countrywide. The concept was brought to Kyrgyzstan in 1994 by the USAID ZdravPlus project, when ZdravPlus set up first family medicine practices in the Issyk Kul Oblast and worked with the Ministry of Health to prepare for their country-wide replication. In 1997, the Government of Kyrgyzstan adopted the model nationally, and now family medicine services are provided by more than 700 centers across all seven regions of the country. USAID also helped open family medicine training centers in each region to



USAID-funded Junior Achievement programs acquaint Kazakhstani youth with the basics of economics and entrepreneurship. Photo: Junior



Pharmacies are among the thousands of businesses that will benefit from the changes in the Law “On Government Procurements.” Photo: BEI



USAID’s project is working with a number of maternity hospitals across Kazakhstan to introduce evidence-based medicine. Photo: ZdravPlus



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provide continuous and easily accessible education for family medicine practitioners. Over the past ten years, this network of training centers, together with ZdravPlus, has retrained almost all of the country's 3,000 primary care doctors and 4,500 primary care nurses in family medicine.

Green Light to the Inspections Law Provisions

The Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic on October 18 approved the Provision on Realization of the Law "On Procedure for Conducting Inspections of Businesses," developed with USAID support. The provision sets principles for inspections by the controlling bodies of the Kyrgyz Republic and should significantly improve operating environment for Kyrgyzstani businesses. The new law and its provisions should transform inspections into an efficient tool that helps entrepreneurs to comply with business regulations and limit opportunities for its abuse by inspectors. The USAID Business Environment Improvement Project, in cooperation with local business associations, played a key role in developing the law as well as its provisions, and is continuing to assist with their implementation. The project also helped to set up a Special Commission under the leadership of the country's Prime Minister to ensure effective implementation of the law.

Kyrgyzstan Develops Capacity to Conduct Antibiotic Sensitivity Studies

With USAID support, Kyrgyzstan recently became the first country in the region able to conduct antibiotic sensitivity studies. Such expertise was developed during a USAID-funded study on drug resistance in the treatment of gonorrhea, which, along with other sexually transmitted infections, is at epidemic levels among the risk groups in the country. In preparation for the study USAID procured testing equipment for four laboratories and provided consultants to guide the analysis. The findings of the study were presented in October and revealed that the most commonly used antibiotic in Kyrgyzstan is not effective for gonorrhea treatment. The final report will suggest alternative regimens.

This new capacity enables the Ministry of Health to conduct antibiotic sensitivity studies for the development of syndromic treatment protocols for sexually transmitted infections at the primary health care level. Such approach is expected to reduce treatment costs and increase the success rates. Kyrgyzstan is planning to continue this work using grants from Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria. Other Central Asian countries are planning to use the study results to develop their own gonorrhea treatment protocols, as well.

Tajikistan

Tajikistan's First Local Governance Survey

In July and August 2007, the USAID Local Governance and Civic Participation project together with Tajik government officials conducted the first wide-scale study of local government practices in Tajikistan. Using questionnaires approved by the Presidential Working Group, over 160 interviews were collected in 33 sites across all regions and across all levels of local government. This was the first comprehensive



Hundreds of family medicine specialists have gathered to a USAID-supported conference to celebrate the 10th anniversary of their profession in Kyrgyzstan. Photo: ZdravPlus



Kyrgyzstan's Prime Minister was one of the supporters of the new provisions. Photo: BEI



The Kyrgyz State Sanitary Epidemiology Department (SSED) now has both expertise and equipment to conduct antibiotic sensitivity studies. Photo: Ministry of Health



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survey and analysis of on-the-ground perspectives and practices of Tajik local governments. Government support for the survey indicates not only their interest in local government reform but also the movement towards evidence-based policymaking.

Turkmenistan

Laboratory Equipment and Materials for the National Tuberculosis Program

To assist the Turkmenistan Ministry of Health with the implementation of the National Tuberculosis Program, Project HOPE and USAID in October delivered 10 binocular microscopes, consumables and reagents for tuberculosis detection and treatment control to various laboratories across the country. This donation will enable laboratory specialists to conduct quality tests for the diagnostics of tuberculosis and support the WHO-recommended directly observed treatment short-course (DOTS) strategy for the treatment of the disease. The microscopes and materials were delivered to laboratories in the cities of Ashgabat and Mary, and the Balkan Region, where USAID is supporting DOTS implementation, as well as in five districts in Lebap and Mary regions where DOTS is implemented by the Turkmenistan Ministry of Health. Tuberculosis control is a priority for the Government of Turkmenistan, which has called for national implementation of the DOTS strategy for tuberculosis control by 2009.

Uzbekistan

Information and Medical Care for Sex Workers to Decrease the Spread of HIV/AIDS and Drug Use

Over 8,000 commercial sex workers in Tashkent City have received HIV prevention services from the USAID Drug Demand Reduction Project (DDRP) in the past 18 months. DDRP informs female sex-workers, including those who use drugs, about HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections, ways to reduce drug use, and refers sexual workers to medical facilities. Program's outreach workers have conducted over 20,000 information sessions, distributed nearly 12,000 educational brochures and more than 17,000 condoms. Additionally, over 1,800 sexual workers were referred for medical consultations. DDRP is using its Unique Identifier Code to track contacts and can tally the number of individuals reached within a five-percent margin of error, while preserving their anonymity. Such information is shared with a number of stakeholders, including the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.



During an interview with the head of the Sughd Oblast Social Assistance Department. Photo: Local Governance project



New equipment and reagents will be used to diagnose tuberculosis in Turkmenistan. Photo: Project HOPE



DDRP uses a number of creative approaches to prevent and stop HIV and drug use among the risk groups in the region. Photo: DDRP